

(Washington, DC)— Congresswoman Gwen Moore (D-Wisc.) today announced that Legal Action of Wisconsin in Milwaukee will receive \$520,000 for the Legal Assistance for Victims Grant Program. The program is intended to strengthen civil and criminal assistance programs for adults and children who are victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking, and need legal help to deal with the grave dangers they are facing.

“Family violence is a scourge in this country – one that recognizes no boundaries, no income bracket, no particular race and no age,” Congresswoman Moore said. “As the economy continues to struggle and individuals have a hard time finding work and making ends meet, I worry that the rate of family violence in our community will increase. Many shelters in Milwaukee and across the country were already struggling with budget cuts before the recession began, and as private fundraising sources continue to dry up, I worry that there will be a vacuum of services just as needs in our community are on the rise. We must make sure that legal assistance, emergency shelters, crisis call centers and counseling services are not reduced in what might prove to be a time of increased need.”

With this award, Legal Action will be able to work with partner organizations to create the Exceptional Needs Victims’ Legal Assistance Program, which will reach out to domestic violence victims in Milwaukee with more far-ranging needs. These needs might include limited English proficiency, disabilities, or an income that is less than 200% of the federal poverty level. This project will create two full time attorney positions and one paralegal position.

“Legal Action of Wisconsin has been ensuring equal justice for domestic violence victims and low-income people for over 40 years,” said Deedee Rongstad, Development and Information Director for Legal Action of Wisconsin. “With this new funding, we will expand these equal justice services and will target an urgent and critical need in Milwaukee: Removing barriers to justice for domestic violence victims who might have exceptional needs.

“Legal Action thanks Congresswoman Gwen Moore for her help in securing this new resource for Milwaukee’s domestic violence victims and for her long-term, deep commitment to Legal Action of Wisconsin, to civil legal services for the poor, and to equal justice for all in Milwaukee.”

The Task Force on Family Violence, IndependenceFirst, and the Hmong American Women’s Association will work with Legal Action to create this new program.

Legal Action of Wisconsin has provided free legal services and representation to low-income members of the community since 1968. They close an average of 10,000 cases annually, and employ 41 attorneys, 23 paralegals, and 24 support staff in their six offices, which serve a total of 39 Wisconsin counties.

In order to further promote awareness of domestic violence issues, Congresswoman Moore will take part in the fourth annual Milwaukee Brides Walk on September 13. This is an event to promote awareness of domestic violence issues -- particularly in the Latino community -- and to honor those victims whose lives have been cut short due to domestic violence. The first Brides Walk was held in New York more than six years ago in memory of Gladys Ricart, who was brutally murdered by an abusive ex-boyfriend on her wedding day just as she was handing the floral bouquets to her bridesmaids.

The first Milwaukee Brides Walk in September 2006 was also the first in the state of Wisconsin. Every year, women across the world participate in walks -- dressed as brides -- to remember Gladys Ricart and to protest against domestic violence. Congresswoman Moore will also offer a resolution before the House of Representatives next week commemorating the fourth annual Milwaukee Brides Walk.

The proceeds from the Milwaukee Brides Walk will go to the UMOS Latina Resource Center.

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